

Title: History of Richard 6

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“TEN!” the sound of the Tournament Master once again bellowed through the arena, causing the audience to once again let out a loud booming cheer. Much like the first fight Richard was on even grounds with his opponent, dodging and parrying the hits while returning a fury of strikes. This match, unlike his first, took on a brutal sense of survival, a rushing of the blood that pushed Richard to attack viperously at his opponent, and leave no attack to chance. After the thirty minute timer rang, Richard’s limbs had grown numb, the two’s techniques matched each other in every swing and parry, as if they had been born with the same body.

Richard knew he had to win this bout, or else he would tire, and his opponent would surely attempt to kill him. Vorid suddenly came bearing down on Richard, breaking the moment of hesitation Richard had created as his mind drifted. Richard parried several blows which would have surely killed him, backing away as he began to lose his defense. Richard stepped back quickly as he dodged another strike, not seeing the sharp rock which protruded behind him.

Falling over, Richard suddenly came to terms with his defeat as Vorid towered over him. The strangely familiar Vorid grinned and gloated, brandishing his weapon before the crowd, eventually raising his blade for a strike aimed at Richard's heart. "Never think you have defeated an opponent until you have his ashes within your hands." The words flooded into his thoughts from no apparent source, Richard suddenly reacted and lunged forward, impaling Vorid with the tip of his dulled blade. The crowd gasped as the wheezing form of Vorid slumped to the ground, his body arcing and suddenly coming to a deathly halt. The tournament masters eyes looked pleased, despite the act that had just occurred.

"May I have your attention fair Britannian's, our winner of this years Youth Tournament of Champions is Lord Richard of Moonglow!"

The crowd broke out into a cheer as hats and other articles of clothing were strewn about the arena floor. Richard looked upwards in the stands, eyeing the form of Zel staring at him intently, a proud look crossing the old mans worn features. Richard suddenly stood still, the feel of magic wavered around him, and the voice of the old man gently found its way to Richard's ear. "I am proud of you, Richard.

You shall always be my son, despite your birthing.”

Richard smiled, and spoke into the air. “And you shall always be my father, Zel.”

## Chapter Seven- Inner Fire

The years had gone by quickly. Richard was now eighteen, his reputation forged through many battles with the Lich Lathari and his sister Kyrina, acting as a squire to the famous Sir Thomas of the Royal Guard. His uncle's death had put Richard into a deep depression, one of many such fits that had plagued him in recent months. Sir Thomas's death during the final attack on the lich twins recently had only added to his grief. The pain of the death of his mentors would never heal, although his volunteering efforts at the newly founded West Yew University helped ease his pain. Richard felt a form of comfort as he helped train children much like he once was in the skill of swordsmanship, but something inside him was empty, something that could not be grasped onto, something out of reach.

“Richard? Should I be swinging my sword like this, or like this?” A young boy dressed in peasants clothing looked up at him with admiration painted in his eyes.

“Here, let me show you, swing like this...” The

child began to swing as directed, overwhelmed by the weight of the sword given to him.

“You need to swing faster! Your enemy could have killed you, married your girl, and raised a family by the time you actually finished that swing.” Richard chuckled as the child picked up the blade once again; a look of determination crossed the boy’s face, one which Richard had come to admire amongst many of the most prominent students he had trained in the past year.

“Here, go practice on that training dummy for now, I need to go to town to purchase more supplies.” Richard began to move slowly through the serene forests of Yew, walking towards the surprisingly quite city center, taking in the scents, sounds, and serenity of nature. Richard admired the peacefulness of this place, although he still longed for the shores of Moonglow Island. Walking slowly, he eyed passing bowyers, practicing their trade using various sharp edged tools, creating crossbows and bows to be sold in town at a decent price. A sudden sound suddenly caught his attention, looking around Richard noticed that the several bowyers who were carving their way through the Yew trees had suddenly vanished. Instinct bred alertness came over him as he began to unconsciously finger his blade while assessing his surroundings thoroughly.

From within the bright lit woodland, several men stepped out into the light, their guises no longer that of bowyers, but of trained soldiers caped in ebony armor. A particularly haggard solider approached Richard, his aged eyes taking on a look of surprise and enjoyment.

"So you live. The Advocate said your wretched form still haunted the plains of the living, but I never believed him." The solider sneered and discretely motioned towards his associates.

"You speak as if you know me, I would remember a brigand like you had I met you before, old one". Richard glared back at the old man, drawing his blade from its sheath.

"And he's lost his mind too, a pity, I had hoped he would recognize old Eoric, maybe give me one last smile before I sent him to see his creator." The old man chuckled wickedly, revealing a row of rotting teeth.

Richard moved back into the thicker woods, knowing he was surrounded, keeping an eye on the raving old man and his shadowy apprentices. As Richard backed into the brush, he suddenly felt a large mass fall upon him, his body now tangled in a thick web of rope. The last image that flashed through his dull blue eyes was that of the butt end of a sword crashing down

onto his skull...

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The blackness began to clear as pieces of a blinding checkerboard began to disassemble themselves, revealing a large man dressed in heavy black armor standing in front of a dark forested backdrop.

The figure bellowed a sadistic, but yet blusterous laugh.

"The gods once again deliver you into my hands, child. How many pains must I inflict upon your worthless body before you finally succumb to death?"

The armored figure sneered, once again showing signs of humor in his tone.